

CHRISTIAN PIETY,

FREED FROM

The many Delusions

OF

MODERN ENTHUSIASTS

Of all DENOMINATIONS.

By PHILALETHES.

The SECOND EDITION.

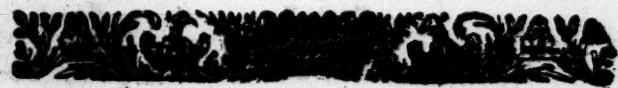


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CHRISTIAN PIETY

F R E E D F R O M

E N T H U S I A S M.



ALL the misery and distress of human nature, whether of body or mind, is wholly owing to this cause, That God is not in man, nor man in God, as the state of his nature requires : It is because man has lost that first *life of God* in his soul, in and for which he was created : He lost this life, and light, and spirit, by turning his imagination, will and desire, into a tasting and sensibility of the good and evil of this earthly world.

THERE are two things raised up in man instead of the *life of God* ; *first*, Self, or selfishness, brought forth by his chusing to have a will and wisdom of his own, contrary to the will and instruction of God his Creator. *Secondly*, An earthly, bestial, mortal life and body, brought forth by his eating that food which was poison to his paradisiacal nature : Both these must therefore be removed ; that is, a man must first die totally to self, and to

all earthly desires, views and intentions, before he can be again in God, as his nature and first creation require.

IF this be a certain and immutable truth, That man, so long as he is a selfish, earthly-minded creature, must be deprived of his true life, the *life of God*, the *Spirit of heaven* in his soul; what misery, nay, what a curse is there in every thing, that nourishes and gratifies our Self-love, Self-esteem, and Self-seeking; and what life is so much to be dreaded as a life of worldly ease and prosperity? On the other hand, what happiness is there in all outward and inward troubles and distresses, when they force us to feel and know the hell that is hidden within us, and the vanity of every thing without us; when they turn all our Self-love into Self-abhorrence, and force us to call upon God to save us from ourselves, and to give us a new life, new light, and new Spirit in JESUS CHRIST.

“ Oh happy famine! might the poor Prodigal have well said, which, by reducing me to the necessity of asking to eat husks with swine, brought me to myself, and caused my return to my first happiness in my Father's house.” In like manner may be said to him who feels the deepest distresses, inwardly, darkness, heaviness, and confusion of thoughts and passions; outwardly, ill usage from friends, relations, and the world, unable to strike up the least spark of light or comfort, by any thought or reasoning of his own;
Oh

Oh happy famine! which leaves you not so much as the husk of one human comfort to feed upon, for this is the time and place for all that good and salvation to happen to you, which happened to the prodigal son; your way is as short, and your success as certain as his was; you have no more to do than he had; you need not call for Books or Methods of Devotion; for in such a state, much reading and borrowed prayers are not your best Method: All that you are to offer to GOD, all that is to help you to find him to be your Saviour and Redeemer, is best taught and expressed by the distressed state of your heart: Only let your distress make you feel and acknowledge this twofold great truth; *first*, That of yourself, you are nothing but darkness, vanity and misery; *secondly*, That of yourself, you can no more help yourself to light and comfort, than you can create an Angel. People at all times can seem to assent to these two truths; but then it is an assent that has no depth or reality, and so of little use; but your condition will open your heart for a deep and full conviction of these truths: Now give way, I beseech you, to this conviction, and then you are the Prodigal come to yourself, and above HALF THE WORK IS DONE.

BEING in full possession of these two truths, and feeling them in the same degree of certainty as you feel your own existence, you are, under this sensibility, to give up
yourself

yourself absolutely and entirely to GOD in CHRIST JESUS, as into the hands of infinite Love; firmly believing this great and infallible truth, that GOD has no will towards you, but that of infinite love, and infinite desire to make you a partaker of his divine nature; and that it is as absolutely impossible for the Father of our Lord JESUS CHRIST to refuse you all that good and salvation you want, as it is for you to take it by your own power. Oh drink deep of this cup! for the precious water of eternal Life is in it. Turn unto GOD with this faith; cast yourself into this abyss of love; and then you will be in that state the Prodigal was in, when he said, *I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son*; and then all that which is related of him, will be fulfilled in you.

MAKE this therefore the twofold exercise of your heart; *now*, bowing yourself down before GOD, in the deepest sense and acknowledgment of your own nothingness and vileness; *then*, looking up unto GOD in faith and love, consider him as always extending the arms of his mercy towards you, and full of an infinite desire to *dwell in you*, as he dwells in the Angels in heaven: Content yourself with this inward and simple exercise of your heart for a while, and seek or like nothing in

in any book, but that which nourishes and strengthens this state of your heart.

Come unto me, says the holy JESUS, *all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you*; here is more for you to live upon, more light for your mind, more of unction for your heart, than in volumes of human instruction; pick up the words of the holy JESUS, and beg of him to be the life and light of your soul; love the sound of his name, for JESUS is the *love*, the *sweetness*, the compassionate *goodness* of GOD himself, which became man, that so man might have power to become the Sons of GOD; love, and pity, and wish well to every soul in the world; dwell in love, and then you dwell in GOD; hate nothing, but the evil that stirs in your heart.

TEACH your heart this prayer, till it continually saith, though not with outward words; "O Holy JESUS, meek Lamb of GOD, Bread that came down from heaven, Light and life of all holy souls, help me to a true and living faith; O do thou open thyself within me, with all thy holy nature, Spirit, tempers, and inclinations, that I may be born again of thee, a new creature, quickened and revived, led and governed by thy holy Spirit."

PRAYER so practised becomes the *life of the soul*, and the *true food of eternity*: Keep in this state of application to GOD, and then you will find it to be the true way of rising
out

out of the vanity of Time into the riches of Eternity.

WE must not always look for the same degrees of fervour; the matter lies not there; nature will have its share; but the ups-and-downs of *that* are to be overlooked, whilst the will and spirit are good, and set right; for the changes of animal fervour, lessen not our union with God. It is the abyss of the heart, an unfathomable depth of eternity within us, as much above sensible fervour, as heaven is above earth; it is *this* that works our way to God, and unites with Him: *this* is the divine nature and power within us, which never calls upon God in vain, but whether helped or deserted by bodily fervour, penetrates through all outward nature, as easily and effectually as our thoughts can leave our bodies, and reach into the regions of eternity.

THE poverty of our fallen nature, the depraved workings of flesh and blood, the corrupt tempers of our polluted birth in this world, do us no hurt, so long as the Spirit of Prayer works contrary to them, and longs for the first birth of the Light and Spirit of Heaven. All our natural evil ceases to be our own evil, as soon as our will and spirit turn from it; it then changes its nature, loses all its poison and death, and only becomes our holy cross, on which we happily die

die from self and this world into the kingdom of Heaven.

LET us therefore continually consider God, as the greatest love; his eternal unchangeable will, as the greatest good and blessing to every creature; and that all the misery, darkness, and death of fallen angels and fallen man, consists in their having lost their likeness to this divine nature: Let us also consider ourselves, and all the fallen world, as having nothing to seek or wish for, but by the Spirit of Prayer to draw into our souls, rays and sparks of the divine, meek, loving, tender nature of God: Lastly, let us consider the holy JESUS, as the *gift of God* to our souls, to begin and finish the birth of God within us, in spite of every inward and outward enemy. These three infallible truths, heartily embraced, and made the nourishment of our souls, shorten and secure the way to heaven, and leave no room for error, scruple or delusion.

EXPECT no light, life or comfort, but from the Spirit of God dwelling and manifesting his own goodness in your soul: The best of men and the best of books can do us good, only so far as they turn us from themselves, and every human comfort, to seek, and have, and receive every kind of good from God alone; not a distant, nor an absent God, but from him who lives, and moves, and works in the Spirit of our souls: They never find

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God,

GOD, who search for him by reasoning and speculation; for since God is the highest Spirit and the highest Life, nothing but a like Spirit, and a like Life, can unite with him, find, feel, or know any thing of Him: Hence it is, that Faith, and Hope, and Love turned towards GOD, are the only possible and also infallible means of obtaining a true and living knowledge of him: And the reason is plain, because by these holy tempers, which are the workings of his Life and Spirit within us, we seek the GOD of Life, where He is, we call upon Him with his own voice, we draw near Him by his own Spirit; for nothing can breathe forth faith, and love, and hope to GOD, but that Spirit and Life which are of GOD, and which through flesh and blood, thus press towards Him, and readily unite with Him.

THERE is not a more clear truth than this, That neither *reasoning* nor *learning* can ever introduce a spark of heaven into our souls; and if this be true, we have nothing to seek, nor any thing to fear from reason: *Life* and *Death* are the things in question, they are neither of them the growth of reason or learning, but each of them is a State of the Soul, and thus differ, *Death is the want,* and *Life is the enjoyment of its highest good.* Reason therefore and Learning have no power here, but by their vain activity to keep the soul insensible of that Life and Death, one of which

which is always growing up in it, according as the will and desire of the heart worketh: Add reason to a vegetable, and you add nothing to its life or death: its life or fruitfulness lieth in the soundness of its root, and the goodness of the soil, and the strength it derives from air and light. Heaven and Hell grow thus in the soul of every man; his heart is the root; if that be turned from evil, it is like the plant in a good soil; when it hungers and thirsts after the divine life, it then, by the Spirit of Prayer, infallibly draws the light and Spirit of God into it, which are infinitely more ready and willing to live and fructify in the soul, than light and air to enter into the plant; for the soul hath its being and life for no other end but that the triune God may manifest the riches and power of his own life in it.

WHEN therefore it is the one ruling, never-ceasing desire of our hearts, that God may be the beginning and end, the reason and motive, the rule and measure of our doing or not doing, from morning to night; then every where, whether speaking or silent, whether inwardly or outwardly employed, we are equally offered up to God, have our life in him, and from him; and are united to him by that Spirit of Prayer which is the comfort, the support, the strength and security of the soul: For this Spirit of Prayer, let us willingly give up all that we inherit

from our fallen father ; to be *all hunger and thirst* after God ; to have no care or thought, but how to be wholly his devoted instruments, every where and in every thing, his adoring, thankful, joyful servants.

LET us have eyes shut, and ears stopped to every thing, that is not a step in that ladder that reaches from earth to heaven : To help us forward, *reading* is good, *bearing* is good, *conversation* and *meditation* are good ; but then, they are only good at times and occasions, in a certain degree ; and must be used and governed with such caution, as we eat, drink, and refresh ourselves, or they will bring forth in us the fruits of intemperance : But the Spirit of Prayer is for all times and all occasions ; it is a lamp to be always burning, a light to be ever shining ; every thing calls for it, every thing is to be done in it, and governed by it ; because it is, and means, and wills the absolute totality of the Soul, not in doing this or that, but wholly and incessantly given up to God, to be and do what, and where, and when he pleases.

THIS state of absolute Resignation, naked Faith, and pure Love of God, is the highest perfection, and most purified life of those, who are Christians indeed ; and is neither more or less than what our blessed Redeemer has called and qualified us to aspire after in these words, *Thy kingdom come, thy will be done*

done in earth as it is in heaven. It is to be fought for in the simplicity of a little child, without being captivated with any mysterious depths or heights of speculation; without coveting any knowledge, or wanting to see any ground of nature, grace or creature, only so far as they bring us nearer to GOD, force us to renounce and forget every thing for Him, to do every thing in Him, with Him, and for Him; and to give every breathing, moving, stirring, intention, and desire of our Soul, Spirit, and Life to Him.

LET every creature have your love: *Love*, with its fruits of *patience, meekness, humility, gentleness, joy*, is all we can wish to ourselves, and our fellow-creatures; for this is to live to GOD, united to him, both for time and eternity.

To desire to communicate good to every creature, in the degree we can, and it is capable of receiving from us, is a divine temper, for thus GOD stands unchangeably disposed towards the whole creation; but as we value the peace which GOD has brought forth by his holy Spirit in us, as we continually desire to be taught by an unction from above, let us not willingly enter into disputes with any about the truths of salvation; but give them every help, except that of debating with them; for no man has a fitness for the light of the Gospel, till he finds an hunger and thirst for something better than that, which
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he is and has by nature: Yet we ought not to check our inclinations to help others in every way we can, only let us do what we do as a work of GOD; and then, whatever may be the event, we shall have reason to be content with the success GOD gives to it. *He that bath ears to hear, let him hear;* may be enough for us, as it was for our blessed Lord. The next thing that belongs to us, which is also Godlike, is a true unfeigned patience and meekness, shewing every kind of good-will to those, who turn a deaf ear towards us; and looking upon it to be as contrary to GOD's method, and the good state of our own souls, to dispute with any man in contentious words, as to fight with him in defence of gospel truths.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you, saith our blessed Lord; and again, he saith by Saint *John, I will give unto him that is athirst, of the fountain of the water of life freely;* he called none else, because no one else hath ears to hear, or a heart to receive the truths of Redemption.

EVERY man is a vain disputer, till something has disturbed his state and awakened a sensibility of his own evil and miserable nature; we are all of us afraid both of inward and outward distress, and yet till distress comes, our life is but a dream, and we have no awakened feelings of our own true state.

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WE are apt to consider Parts and Abilities, as the proper Qualifications for the reception of divine Truths; and to wonder, that a person of a fine understanding should not immediately embrace just and solid doctrines: But the matter is quite otherwise; had man kept possession of his first glorious state, there had been no foundation for the gospel Redemption, and the doctrine of the Cross must have appeared quite unreasonable to be pressed upon him; and therefore, says our Lord, *To the poor is the gospel preached*; it is solely to them, and to none else; that is, to poor fallen man, who has lost all the true natural riches and greatness of his divine life, to him is the gospel preached; but if man feels and knows nothing of this poverty of his nature, he is not the person to whom the gospel belongs; it has no more suitableness to his state, than it had to man unfallen; and then, the greater his parts and abilities are, the better is he qualified to shew the folly of every doctrine, of which he has no want; and (being ignorant of the depth of his heart) to gloss over the necessities and infirmities of his nature.

SUCH a man, though he knows it not, is as yet only at play and pastime in a matter of eternal consequence, pleasing himself with supposed, deep enquiries after strict truth, whilst he is only sporting himself with lively, wandring images of this or that, just as they

they happen to start up in his mind ; but till he sees himself in the state of the prodigal Son, and feels himself that very person there recorded, he cannot see the fitness of that Redemption, which the infinite love of God offers to him : Such an one, alas ! is rich, he is sound, light is in his own power, goodness is in his own possession, and eternal Life within his own reach ; he feels no distress or darkness, but has a crucible of Reason and Judgment, that on every occasion separates Gold from Dross ; therefore he must be left to his own *Elysium*, till the tender mercy of GOD awakens him by other methods than argument and disputation.

LET us beware also of the religious Pharisee, who raves against spiritual religion, because it touches the very heart-string of all systematical Divinity, and shakes the very foundation of every *Babel* in every Christian country ; for not a system of Divinity, since systems were in being, whether Popish or Protestant, deserves a better name.

ALL preachers of the true, spiritual mystery, of a birth, light and life from above, in and by JESUS CHRIST, ever were, and will be treated by the reigning, fashionable Orthodoxy, as enemies to the letter and ordinances of the Gospel ; in like manner as the Prophets in the *Jewish* Church (who were the mystic preachers of that dispensation) were despised and condemned, for calling
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ing people to a spiritual meaning of the dead letter, to a holiness infinitely greater than that, which they placed in outward sacrifices, forms, and ceremonies.

WHOEVER he be that has any situation of his own to defend, be it that of a celebrated Preacher, a Champion for received Orthodoxy, a Head, a Leader, or Follower of any Sect or Party, or particular Method; or that seems, both in his own eyes, and in the eyes of others, to have made himself significant in any kind of religious Distinction; every such person sooner or later will find, that he has much of that very same to give up, which hindered the zealous and eminently religious Pharisee from converting to CHRIST in the spirit of a little child.

NOR doth it help the matter, that such an one abounds with piety and excellency, for St Paul was governed by a spirit of great piety, great excellency, and zeal for GOD. When he was persecuting the disciples of CHRIST; he says of himself, That he *lived in all good conscience, as touching the law blameless, and according to the strictest sect of the Jewish religion*: for the Pharisees, though many of them had all that Hypocrisy and Rottenness which CHRIST laid to their charge, yet as a sect they were an order of most confessed and resplendent sanctity; and yet the more earnest and upright they were in this kind of zeal for goodness, the more earnestly they opposed and condemned the

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heavenly mystery of a *new life* from CHRIST, as appears from St *Paul*.

THIS sect of the Pharisees did not cease with the *Jewish* church, it only lost its old name, it is still in being, and springs now in the same manner from the Gospel, as it did then from the Law; it has the same place, lives the same life, does the same work, minds the same things, has the same goodness at heart, has the same religious honour, and claim to piety, in the Christian, as it had in the *Jewish* church; and as much mistakes the depths of the mystery of the Gospel, as that sect mistook the mystery signified by the letter of the Law and the Prophets.

IT would be easy to shew in several instances, how the leaven of that sect works amongst us, just as it did amongst them: *Have any of the rulers believed on him?* was the orthodox question of the antient Pharisees. Now we Christians readily and willingly condemn the weakness and folly of that question; and yet who does not see, that, for the most part, both priest and people, in every Christian country, live and govern themselves by the folly and weakness of the very same spirit which put that question: for when God, as He has always done from the beginning of the world, raises up private and illiterate persons, full of light and wisdom from above, so as to be able to discover all the workings of the mystery of iniquity,
and

and to open the ground, and truth, and absolute necessity of such an inward Spirit and Life of CHRIST revealed in us, as time, carnal wisdom, and worldly policy have departed from; when all this is done, by the weakest instruments of God, in such a simplicity and fulness of demonstration as may be justly deemed a Miracle; do not Clergy and Laity get rid of it all, though ever so unanswerable, merely by the strength of the Pharisees good old question, saying with them, "Have any of the Rulers believed and taught these things? Hath the Church in Council or Convocation? Hath Calvin, Luther, Zuinglius, or any of our renowned System-makers, ever taught or asserted these matters?"

BUT hear what our blessed Lord saith, of the place, the power, and origin of Truth; he refers us not to the current doctrines of the times, or to the systems of men, but to his own Name, his own Nature, his own Divinity hidden in us: *My sheep*, saith he, *hear my voice*. Here the whole matter is decisively determined, both where Truth is, and who they are that can have any knowledge of it.

HEAVENLY Truth is no where spoke but by the voice of CHRIST, nor heard but by a power of CHRIST living in the hearer. As He is the eternal only Word of God, that speaks forth all the wisdom, and

wonders of God; so He alone is the Word, that speaks forth all the life, wisdom, and goodness, that is or can be in any creature; it can have none but what it has in him and from him: This is the one unchangeable boundary of Truth, Goodness, and every Perfection of Men on earth, or Angels in heaven.

LITERARY Learning, from the beginning to the end of time, will have no more of heavenly Wisdom, nor any less of worldly Foolishness in it, at one time than at another; its nature is one and the same through all ages; what it was in the Jew and the Heathen, that same it is in the Christian. Its name as well as nature is unalterable, viz. *Foolishness with God.*

THOUGH the mockings of such men, and the many other spiritual conflicts with the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, may abound with trials disagreeable to flesh and blood, yet be of good cheer and fear not; *stand fast in the Lord, and he will bear thee in the day of trouble; the Name of the God of Jacob will defend thee; he will send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Sion.* The LORD of Hosts, who hath overcome the world, will strengthen thee, and give thee the victory in all things; and *this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our Faith: fight therefore the good fight of Faith, for to him that overcometh, our Almighty Saviour by his holy Spirit hath promised to give the tree of Life — That he shall*

shall not be hurt of the second Death— That he shall sit with him; and that he shall inherit all things *. Even so grant, blessed Lord, to every one that calleth upon thy name. *Amen.*

FOR your assistance in this state of trial, I will transcribe a few RULES, which have long lain by me for my own use; and may the GOD of all comfort bring them home to your heart with a fulness of blessing, and make them instrumental to unite you more firmly to him.

I. RECEIVE every outward and inward trouble, every disappointment, temptation, and desolation, with both thy hands, as a true opportunity of dying to Self, and of entering into a fuller fellowship with thy self-denying, suffering Saviour.

II. LOOK not at any inward or outward trouble in any other view; reject every other thought about it; and then every kind of trial and distress will become the blessed day of thy prosperity.

III. BE afraid of seeking or finding comfort in any thing but God alone. “ Quid
“ est cor purum? cui ex toto & purè sufficit
“ DEUS,

* These, and many like passages, may be read in the *Apocalypse*, and in other parts of the holy Scripture.

“DEUS, cui nihil sapit, quod nihil delectat
 “nisi DEUS.” *that is*, What constitutes
 a pure Heart? one to which God alone is
 totally, and purely sufficient; to which no-
 thing relishes, or gives delight but God alone!

IV. THAT state is best, which exerciseth
 the highest Faith in, and fullest Resignation
 to God.

V. WHAT is it you want and seek, but
 that GOD *may be all in all in you*? But how
 can this be, unless all creaturely good and
 evil become as nothing in you, or to you?

“Oh anima mea, abstrahe te ab omnibus.

“Quid tibi cum mutabilibus creaturis?

“Solum sponsum tuum, qui omnium

“creaturarum est author expectans, hoc

“age, ut cor tuum ille liberum & expedi-

“tum semper inveniat, quoties illi ad ip-

“sum venire placuerit.” *That is*, Oh my

Soul! abstract thyself from every thing. What
 hast thou to do with changeable creatures?
 Waiting and expecting thy Bridegroom, who
 is the Author of all creatures, let it be thy
 sole concern that he may find thy heart free
 and disengaged as often as it shall please him
 to visit thee.

VI. Be assured of this, that sooner or la-
 ter, we must be brought to this conviction,
 That every thing in ourselves by nature is
 evil, and must be entirely given up; and that
 nothing

nothing that is creaturely can make us better than we are by nature. Happy therefore and blessed are all those inward or outward troubles, that hasten this conviction in us; that with the whole strength of our Souls, we may be driven to seek ALL from and in God, without the least thought, hope, or contrivance after any other relief: Then it is, that we are made truly partakers of the Cross of CHRIST, and from the bottom of our hearts shall be enabled to say with Saint Paul, *God forbid that I should glory in any thing, save the Cross of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, by which I am crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me.*

VII. FINALLY, Give up yourself to God without reserve. This implies such a state or habit of heart, as does nothing of itself, from its own reason, will or choice, but stands always in faith, hope, and absolute dependence upon being led by the Spirit of God into every thing and every occasion, that is according to God's will and design with us; seeking nothing by designing, reasoning, and reflection, but how you shall best promote the honour of God in singleness of heart; meeting every thing that every day brings forth, as something that comes from God, and is to be received and gone through in such an heavenly use of it, as you would suppose the holy JESUS would have

have done, in such occurrences.—This is an attainable degree of perfection, and by having CHRIST and his Spirit always in your eye, and nothing else, you will never be left to yourself, nor without the full guidance of God.

I N vain thou hop'st for bliss on this poor clod ;
Return, and seek thy Father and thy God ;
Yet think not to regain thy native sky
Borne on the wings of vain Philosophy.
Mysterious passage ! hid from mortal eyes :
Soaring you'll sink, and sinking you will rise.
Let humble thoughts thy wary footsteps guide ;
Regain by Meekness, what you lost by Pride.

7 AP 66

The END.

